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THREE SERMONS,

PREACHED AT THE

NORFOLK ASSIZES.



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Preached at the

NORFOLK ASSIZES

In the Spring and Summer 1788, and in
the Spring 1789,

ON THE

NECESSITY of GOVERNMENT,

AND THE

USEFULNESS of MAGISTRATES,

AND ON

CIVIL and RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

ILLUSTRATED WITH NOTES.

Containing Remarks upon Inspiration, the Variety of
Opinions subsisting among Christians, Establishments,
and other Points of Importance relative to the present
State of Christianity.

By the Rev. WILLIAM MANNING, *K*

Rector of Difs and Brome in Norfolk.

NON STUDEMUS PACI IN DETRIMENTUM VERÆ
DOCTRINÆ. GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

L O N D O N :

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M.DCC.XC.

DEDICATION
THREE SERMONS
THOMAS KERRICH
MORTIMER



As your affectionate
friend and
your
high
the
preaching
now
of know
properly
portion as to

and obliged
Yours
and obliged

DEDICATION.

TO

THOMAS KERRICH, Esq.

Of GELDESTON in NORFOLK.

DEAR SIR,

AS your affectionate partiality induced you to appoint me your Chaplain when you were High Sheriff, you were of course the cause of my writing and preaching the Sermons which I now publish, and therefore I do not know that they can be so properly inscribed to any other person as to yourself.

I am, dear Sir,
Your affectionate Uncle,
And obliged humble Servant,
WM. MANNING.

Diss, February 18, 1790.

T H E
P R E F A C E.

THE following Sermons have met with the approbation of several respectable gentlemen, and not a few have expressed a very earnest wish to see the second in print. And as some of the sentiments contained in them must be essentially right or wrong, and relate to matters that appear to me to be of the last importance, I am glad of the opportunity of submitting them to the impartial judgment of the public. Should the public decision be in their favour, I shall be con-

firmed in a train of thinking which I have long respected as just and proper. Should the contrary happen, I shall receive the benefit of correcting my own opinions by the sentiments of those who are much wiser than myself.

In the first Sermon, I trust, nothing will be found upon examination, but what is congenial with our excellent constitution. I have also intimated in it the propriety of setting religious establishments upon the most extensive foundation, of which Christianity is capable. And in the second and third Sermons, I have expatiated more largely upon this subject.

In the last century, when religious

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gious disputes, by unhappily mixing with civil broils, had produced anarchy and confusion; the most excellent, pious, and learned Doctor Jeremy Taylor (afterwards Bishop of Down and Connor), with a view to render the minds of mankind, however varying in opinion, calm and benevolent towards each other, wrote his treatise on the Liberty of Prophesying; in which he displayed the greatest abilities, learning and judgment: and which I have never observed to have been answered, or even censured, by any one. I had long entertained ideas upon this subject similar to those of Doctor Taylor, before I met with his treatise upon it: and it gave me

me the highest pleasure to find my sentiments corroborated by that eminent Prelate. I was encouraged to pursue the scheme of thought with fearless freedom. And if it has carried me somewhat farther in various particulars than he went; if it has even led me to wish that the use of all creeds should be laid aside in forms of public devotion, I hope I shall be pardoned for the presumption. For though of so much inferior abilities, still I enjoy the advantage of living an hundred years after him: a period of time, in which the pens of very able men have been employed in discussing these matters. And I may compare myself to a person of weaker eyes, who,

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II

who, placed upon an eminence, can see objects undiscernible by one of the keenest sight, if he stand upon lower ground.

This I trust may plead my apology for the length I may be thought to have gone in my second and third Sermons, and more especially in my notes upon them.

Blessed be God we live in placid times, free from civil contentions! And can there be a more proper season for the tranquil investigation of the rights of religious liberty? Freedom of inquiry cannot now be stopped, and God forbid it should. Mankind see every day more and more the necessity of permitting it: and it evidently

dently increases. A liberty the most unlimited, and the most uncensured, is now generously allowed to the free discussion of religious subjects. But amidst this universal diffusion of religious and intellectual liberty, the Clergy of the established church labour under the oppression of being fettered by our laws with a particular set of opinions, which they are bound to acknowledge and maintain. That these articles, as they are called, of religion, were the opinions of times that were far less enlightened than the present, and can ill sustain the test of just and accurate inquiry, may be very truly asserted. But I shall waive these considerations, as
I con-

I conceive it to be of very little consequence whether they be the opinions of this or the last century; or of two, or ten, or more centuries back. Revelation stands upon matter of *fact*. Mere *opinions* of themselves avail nothing to the operation of it upon the hearts of mankind.

That many men of the established church, eminent for learning, and a due attention to the duties of their office, find themselves perplexed and embarrassed by being obliged to maintain opinions, to *them* at least, of doubtful authority, is too obvious to be denied. And some there are, who conceiving these opinions to have

no foundation in truth, have relinquished those stations, by which they could have extended their protection to "father, mother, brother, sister, wife, and children;" and that not for the sake of the *Gospel*, which would have rendered their line of duty clear, and not to be mistaken; but for mere *opinion* sake, "which is a plain demonstration that such bodies of confession and articles do much hurt*."

Happy shall I be, if my weak endeavours can at all assist in promoting a plan, which may bring relief to those worthy minds, who

* See Dr. Taylor's *Liberty of Prophecy*, sect. 22;

are

P R E F A C E. 15

are thus embarrassed, and in reinstating those, who have thought themselves bound to resign their office, without distressing those who are tenacious of the present established opinions; and in promoting that peace and good will amongst Christians whereby the happy effects of the gospel of Christ may be more visible in their lives and conversations; and consequently the light of it more speedily extended through the world.

I cannot forbear transcribing more fully the passage from this excellent work of that “pious, ingenious, learned, and sweet tempered bishop,” as Dr. Jortin calls him.

Few

" Few churches that have framed bodies of confession and articles, will endure any person that is not of the same confession : which is a plain demonstration that such bodies of confession and articles do much hurt, by becoming instruments of separating and dividing communions, and making unnecessary or uncertain propositions a certain means of schism and disunion. But then men would do well to consider whether or no such proceedings do not derive the guilt of schism upon them who least think it, and whether of the two is the schismatic, he that makes unnecessary and (supposing the state of things) inconvenient impositions,

or

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or he that disobeys them because he cannot without doing violence to his conscience believe them; he that parts communion, because without sin he could not entertain it, or they that have made it necessary for him to separate by requiring such conditions, which to no man are simply necessary, and to his particular are either sinful or impossible."

PREFACE

The author of this book, being a student of the law, has been struck by the fact that the law is a science, and that the student of the law should be able to apply the principles of the law to the facts of the case. The author has endeavored to present the law in a clear and concise manner, and to show the student how to apply the principles of the law to the facts of the case.

THE ALABAMA COURT OF APPEALS, in its decision in the case of *Alabama v. Alabama*, has held that the law is a science, and that the student of the law should be able to apply the principles of the law to the facts of the case. The author has endeavored to present the law in a clear and concise manner, and to show the student how to apply the principles of the law to the facts of the case.

S E R M O N I.

Preached at the Assizes at Thetford,
March 16, 1788.

St. L U K E XII. 57.

*Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not
what is right?*

THAT man was intended by
his Almighty Creator for so-
cial life, is evident from the facul-
ties with which he has endued him,
and the affections of which he has
rendered him susceptible. And in-
deed he is so formed, that without
society he would be the most miser-

able of all creatures. And that society cannot exist without laws, and without magistrates to execute those laws upon offenders, every day's experience clearly evinces. The power of the magistrate is justly called in scripture the ordinance of God. Not that God has actually and personally appointed each magistrate to his office, but that it is the will of him, who is the God, not of confusion, but of order and of peace, that good government should be maintained in the world.

The history of revelation recorded in holy writ informs us that God himself directed certain punishments for certain crimes : and that for some of the more atro-

cious kind, which were subversive of society, and endangered the very existence of it, he allowed that the sword of justice should cut the offenders off. Now that which God has once appointed, will of course be obligatory, while the reasons remain for which it was instituted. The end and design of God's directing these punishments, was the peace, happiness, security, and well being of society. And though this was done at a less civilized, and less enlightened period; and though the many divine communications since imparted to mankind, and especially the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, may be expected to have sufficiently illuminated the human mind, to have rendered it

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probable,

probable, that the harsh necessity of applying these remedies might have been avoided ; yet if men will still continue to love darkness rather than light, and will give themselves up to the practice of those enormities which disturb the peace and good order of society, and which, unrestrained, would create the greatest confusion and misery, then the reason still continues why wrath must be immediately executed upon such offenders. The obvious reason is, lest the hearts of too many of the sons of men should be fully set in them to do evil, and anarchy and confusion should be the result.

Nor can the mild precepts and benevolent spirit of the Gospel
have

have any tendency to take away the power of the magistrate over the lives of heinous offenders. The restraint it puts upon us is to prevent our pursuing those evil courses which render us obnoxious to the laws ; and not to weaken the hands of those who are ordained to bear the sword for the most beneficial purposes ; for the punishment of evil doers, as well as for the protection of those who do well. For to secure the peace of society against those who live uninfluenced by the precepts of religion—to redress the injured—to check the violent—and to discipline the unruly, is to discharge an office which is a fair transcript of

the beneficent providence of God ; and is a continued series of efforts to make men good and happy. A religion, therefore, which comes from God, can never militate against the exercise of an authority so conducive to the well being of mankind.

The fact is, the Christian Religion has not at all interfered with the civil governments of the world. As it was intended to be the universal religion of mankind, it has left it to human wisdom in every nation to establish that form of government which is best adapted to the climate—to the genius—and to the manners and customs of the people. It has taught its followers
that

that quiet, peaceable, virtuous, and moral conduct, which will recommend them to the approbation and praise of *every* civil power, leaving the licentious and inordinate evil doers to the coercion of those laws which their respective nations shall have established as most conducive to the public good.

For mankind being instructed by revelation, that there is a God, a providence, and a future state of retribution; and that the only way to recommend themselves to the Supreme Being is by the practice of piety and moral virtue; the human mind is sufficiently enlightened to give free scope to the operation of those faculties with which
the

the Creator has endued it. It is thus enabled to act for itself, and to establish those forms of government, and enact those laws, which shall appear most beneficial in promoting the peace, order, and happiness of society, under all the various circumstances of manners and situation. And in this respect mankind become capable of judging even of *themselves*, as my text expresses it, of what is right.

Since then the power of the magistrate, though not the immediate institution of God, but, as St. Peter styles it, the ordinance of man, is agreeable to the will of God, as the best means of communicating and preserving human happiness ; it is
the

the duty of us all, in our several stations, to exert ourselves in the support of civil government, and the due execution of its laws.

And if this be the duty of all civilized people ; we of this nation have the strongest motives and incitements to it. We live under a government, the form of which has been gradually wrought up, by the free exercise of human reason, to that degree of perfection, which renders it the admiration, and not unfrequently the envy, of the surrounding kingdoms. And we have a Prince upon the throne, who sets us, in his own person, an example of the practice of those virtues, which the laws of his kingdom
are

are enacted to support. But the excellence of our constitution is in no respect more conspicuous, than in the happy provision which is made for the administration of equal justice in our courts of judicature.

The trial by juries is the boast, the honest and noble boast of Englishmen. This privilege, this security of our liberties, can never be lost, can never be deranged, but by the operation of partiality and prejudice in the juries themselves. But should these too frequently betray an unwarrantable bias in their determinations; then the institution itself, wise and beneficial as it originally was, becoming,

ing, through their means, defective and inadequate to the purposes for which it was intended, may probably be exposed to contempt; and incur the danger of being laid aside as a lifeless branch, which has ceased to yield its fruit. For civil government and the authority of the laws must at all events be supported. It is much to be wished, therefore, that men of abilities and of the most property in that line of life from whence the juries are formed, would not evade and shrink from the office; but, when called upon, would with zeal and alacrity press forward to take this important trust upon themselves, and to rescue it, as much as may be, out of the

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the hands of the ignorant and illiterate; who are of course most liable to the impressions of prejudice and partiality. It is a gloomy mark of degeneracy and of the low ebb of public spirit, when a great reluctance is shewn to undertake a labour required at our hands for the public good. And with respect to those who may undertake this sacred trust, give me leave to exhort them to a faithful and conscientious discharge of it.

Let them consider then, and that not merely as a matter of course, or as imposed by the usual formality of business, but as a point in which their *consciences* and *characters* are essentially concerned; that

that it is their duty, not only to protect the accused from suffering wrongfully, but also, and equally, to take care that the guilty do not escape punishment; lest crimes be multiplied upon us, and through their weak and ill judged pity, or perhaps some worse motives (which (a) had not a recent instance given us too much reason to suspect, it might be thought unfair even to suggest), the benevolent purposes of the law be defeated, and universal misery and confusion be introduced. And how they can answer this to God, their king, their country, or to their own consciences, it will behove them well to consider. And let them farther remember,

remember, that the immediate servants of the crown and of the state are entitled to the protection of the laws, equally with the rest of their fellow subjects; and that the crimes committed against the one demand their assent to the avenging sword of justice, as well as the crimes committed against the other. Their oath informs them of their duty; and is the greatest possible obligation to the discharge of it. Which duty, to remove every plea of ignorance, is further explained to them by the excellent charges which are usually delivered from the Bench, which is filled, from a grateful heart I speak it, by persons as renowned for their virtue, uprightness,

uprightness, inflexible integrity, and unbiassed impartiality, as for their great learning, professional knowledge, and profound abilities. So that were it left to them alone, we could have no doubt but that the most exact justice would be administered. But no prudent man would assent to throw down that barrier which has proved the security of civil liberty in less happy times: not knowing what revolving ages may bring to pass.—By no means.—Endeavour, then, by a steady and strict discharge of your duty, to transmit those rights, which you have received from your ancestors, to your latest posterity, that they also may rejoice in their

birth-right privileges. Privileges which never were despised but by minds as weak and frivolous, as they were sordid and mercenary.

The thoughtless and profane Esau for a mess of pottage sold his birth-right; though thereunto were annexed the gracious promises of God.—Not so the great Apostle of the Gentiles—St. Paul. For, though harassed by persecutions, and elevated with holy zeal in the Christian cause, still attentive to the claims of human nature, he was too wise to look down upon the rights he inherited. But with an honest warmth and spirited earnestness he asserted, “I was free born.”

Seeing

Seeing now that we are thus blessed in our civil liberties at home, it may be judged right to attempt an extension of them, as far as lies in our power, to those regions of the world, which are connected with us. Enlightened reason surely suggests this to be the most grateful offering we can make to God, in return for our own happiness. And the times, if we may presume to judge by the *signs* of them, seem favourable to this purpose. The benevolent spirit of Christianity has widely diffused a temper of mind friendly to the rights of human nature, which, in this day, are more attended to by the nations of Europe in general

than at any preceding period. And it is no wonder that this land of liberty partakes of the sacred flame; and that addresses are sent from various parts of the kingdom, praying the aid of the legislative power in relief of the enslaved, despised, and oppressed Africans.

The tyranny under which they are all but crushed, the horrid circumstances attending this abominable traffic in human blood, call aloud for the interference of authority, and seem to demand that proper steps may be taken for granting the redress which humanity dictates, and religion inspires, as speedily and effectually, as wisdom, and a due regard to the public

public safety, will permit. This last consideration intimates to us, that the emancipation of slaves must be *gradual*. The human mind requires to be prepared for all important changes in its condition and situation. And a claim of property, though unjustly acquired at first, may by length of time, and by custom and connivance, reasonably expect some attention.

“Christianity” as an able writer observes, “can only operate as “an alternative.”

I cannot, however, but congratulate the friends of revelation upon the anticipation of that happy and splendid period, for there seem

to be evident marks of its approach, when our holy religion shall have completed a total abolition of slavery, and the nations, now groaning under the tyranny of it, shall become partakers with us in the enjoyment of the civil and religious rights of human nature here on earth, and be animated with the same prospect of the future glory of the life to come.

And I cannot but further look with complacency and satisfaction upon the aspect of the times, as indicating the most favourable disposition to the enlargement of the religious rights of mankind. The acrimony and rigour of temper, arising from discordant opinions, have

have been long dissolving into Christian charity and mutual forbearance. And it is become not uncommon to enjoy the amiable and pleasing sight of persons of different religious persuasions cordially uniting in promoting plans and institutions calculated to be beneficial to the souls as well as bodies of their fellow-creatures.

May this disposition (and I trust I shall not be censured for the wish) go forward till national religious establishments are set upon the most *comprehensive* basis; and an *unlimited* toleration be granted to *all*, except those (and I conceive it will be the exception of few if any), who, by mixing and uniting,

political with their religious tenets,
may endanger the peace and secu-
rity of the state.

Liberality of sentiment has made
that progress of late years, as to
render it probable, that the eight-
teenth century may end gloriously,
by so effectually annihilating the
spirit of persecution, that mankind,
however varying in *opinions*, will
be united in *affection* under the in-
fluence of their common Christi-
anity; having long since found, by
dear-bought experience, that while
they vainly embraced the shadow,
the substance eluded their grasp;
and that whilst they were too soli-
citous to retain the form of godli-
ness, they insensibly lost the power
of

of it. A lenity in religious persuasion, and a mildness of sentiment naturally resulting from a conviction of these errors, will lead to a conduct that must place religion in a most respectable light in the eyes of mankind; and give force to the operation of it upon their lives and manners.

And will not these meditations, these pleasing reflections, endear our holy religion to us, and engage us in the practice of its pious and righteous precepts? What more delightful than to join hand in hand in giving glory to God in the highest, and promoting peace and good will amongst men! This is to be the disciples indeed of the Prince
of

of peace. And these are the comforts best adapted to refresh the soul of the religious man, who looks up to the Father of mercies with the filial reverence of fear and love.

But alas! for those depraved and wretched beings upon whom no religious impression can be made of weight sufficient to enforce the obligation of moral duty, but on the contrary who will dare to invade the property of their fellow subjects by fraud and violence, committed as well against private individuals as against the public revenue, and perpetrate every enormity, not even murder itself excepted; what can be done?

What!

What ! but that they be restrained
by the awful tribunals of courts of
justice?

Happy would it be for them if
they would suffer their minds to be
influenced by a reverential awe and
fear of the dread Majesty of that
Supreme Almighty Being, who,
“ after he hath killed, hath power
“ to cast both soul and body into
“ hell.”

What is but that they be retained
by the power of the law

Happy would it be for them if

THE MON

influenced by a reverential awe and

firm and at the same time

Superior power

"to cast down every high power

"hell"

All the ends of the world shall remember and
turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of
the nation shall worship before him.

THE flow degrees by which
human knowledge is ac-
quired renders it no improbable
conjecture, that, had man been
left to himself as soon as his great
Creator had formed him, his ex-
istence

S E R M O N II.

Preached at the Assizes at Norwich,
July 15, 1788.

P S A L M XXII. 27.

*All the ends of the world shall remember and
turn unto the Lord : and all the kindreds of
the nations shall worship before him.*

THE slow degrees by which
human knowledge is at-
tained renders it no improbable
conjecture, that, had man been
left to himself as soon as his great
Creator had formed him, his ex-
istence

istence would have been of short duration.

But not to insist upon this, and even allowing that the human species, created upon a spot supplied with fruits necessary for the support of life, might have continued to exist, and increase in number; it still would have been improbable, if not impossible, that they should ever of themselves have attained to the knowledge of their Creator, have become acquainted with the end and design of their creation, or have obtained a clear perception of the moral duties, necessary as well to render this life comfortable, and to give stability to the enjoyment of it, as to pre-

pare them for eternal felicity in the blissful presence of God, in a more happy and illustrious state of existence hereafter.

For though mankind are created with faculties capable of reasoning; and though the Almighty Creator left not himself without witness; "the heavens declaring
"the glory of God, and the firmament shewing his handy work;" speaking to all nations in this glorious voice of nature; yet some intimation, some preparatory instruction seems necessary to gain a due attention to this heavenly lesson; and to call for the exertion of the reasoning faculties of the mind of man.

This

This world has been justly considered as a place of probation and trial; it may also be considered as a place of education: of education in two respects. The one to train up individuals for the enjoyment of happiness in the life to come; and the other to raise up the collective body of mankind, here on earth, by the cultivation of virtue and knowledge, to that height of civilization to which they are capable of attaining by (*b*) the full expansion and operation of those intellectual powers which God has bestowed upon them.

And agreeable to this idea is the information of the sacred records;

cords ; which tell us that God, having created man capable of religious knowledge, and of acquiring a sense of moral obligation, did not leave him ignorant of the Author of his being, nor exposed to the doubts and uncertainties of the slow investigation of reasoning which ascends from the creature to the Creator ; but manifested himself to him, and gave him instructions suited to the early periods of his existence, and tending to explain religious and moral duties in proportion as experience unfolded the utility of them. And upon any remarkable deviation from piety and virtue, such instances of divine punishments were inflicted,

as might serve for perpetual and
 awful memorials to succeeding
 ages; and warn them of the dread-
 ful consequences that would follow
 upon their daring to offend their
 Almighty Creator.

Thus did it please the Supreme
 Being to conduct the rational crea-
 tures, whom he has placed at the
 head of this earth; not by impel-
 ling them in the course of their
 duty by fixed and stated laws, as
 he over-rules inanimate matter,
 nor confining them by unerring
 instinct, as he guides the inferior
 animals; but, having formed them
 with the comprehensive faculty of
 choosing the good, and refusing
 the evil, he has left them to all
 that

that variety of conduct which must be the unavoidable consequence of their being intrusted, in this their frail state, with so sublime a talent.

Whatever might have been expected from beings thus formed and endowed, the fact was that they perverted and abused their endowments and free agency; gradually deviated from the light of divine communications; sunk down from the paths of virtue, and at last became enveloped in the darkest gloom of superstition and idolatry.

The all-gracious Author of their being did not however give them up to the consequences of their de-

pravity, nor suffer them finally to perish in their folly; but prepared a way to redeem them out of this abject and degraded state. (c) He chose to himself a peculiar people, not for their own sakes, as they were often admonished, but for the — sake of the accomplishment of his own grand design: which was to preserve the worship of him, the only true God, till the fulness of time should come, in which he would raise up in their nation, the only remaining place adapted to that purpose, the promised Redeemer to diffuse an universal light over all nations. The happiness or misery of this people was accordingly made to correspond with
 their

their obedience or disobedience. However refractory they might be, they were compelled to be subservient to the end of their institution, by which they were separated from the rest of mankind. When instead of inviting the attention of the surrounding world by their adherence to piety, and by their advancement in moral virtue, and by these means affording the intended example and instruction, they, on the contrary, became corrupted by the idolatry of the Gentiles, and debased in iniquity; their transgressions called down divine judgments upon them; they were delivered into the hands of their enemies, and suffered under the

complicated miseries of war, famine, captivity and desolation. But the original design of their institution was still kept in view, and was the grand object of these vigorous dispensations : for when dispersed among the Gentiles, they could not fail of communicating, in some measure, the knowledge of the only true God. And when by these means the world was suitably prepared, Christianity made its appearance ; a light sufficient to admonish all the ends of the world to remember and turn unto the Lord : and which in time will, we trust, induce all the kindreds of the nations to worship before him.

Christianity, which teaches us a
solid

solid and rational piety, which expands the human mind to the clearest perception of the moral and relative duties of civil and social life, may be expected to work the most beneficial effects amongst mankind.

Great and glorious are the effects which it has already produced.

The baseless fabrick of heathen idolatry, which had so long infatuated the mind of man, is vanished from all those countries which the light of the gospel illuminates. Superstition is diminished, and is wearing away; especially in a country like our own, where religious knowledge has a more full

scope, and where religious principles are submitted to a more free examination, and to a more strict enquiry than in any other nation. The cruelties and ravages of war are abated by the benign spirit of Christianity. And the laws and manners of the people in Christian nations will, upon the comparison, be found to excel those of the ancient heathen world; and those also of the people, upon whom it has not yet shined, or has unfortunately ceased to shine.

These are some of the benefits which mankind even now enjoy from this heavenly source of happiness and improvement. We have the consolation of prophecy that Christianity
will

will hereafter extend itself over all the earth ; and will also have a more powerful influence upon the lives and conversations of mankind. That Christianity should be of slow progress in bringing the human mind to a full submission to the purity of its precepts, can be no wonder, when we consider that every inordinate selfish passion sets itself up in opposition to it. But experience may in time evince that a generous attention to the *common* good is the only way to obtain and secure the happiness of each *individual*. And those restless disturbers of the peace, quiet, and enjoyment of society ; ambition, envy, covetousness, intemperance, and the
love

love of pleasure, may give way to the self-denying, chaste, benevolent, meek, and humble spirit of the gospel.

There has been no greater obstruction to the prevalence of Christianity, than the supercilious enmity arising from the disputes amongst Christians varying in opinions; which disputes they carried on with a blind, intemperate, and dogmatical zeal. The different educations, tempers, and degrees of understanding amongst mankind render a variety of opinions unavoidable. And therefore to bring mankind to be of one opinion is impossible; and consequently the attempt is absurd. The violent persecutions,

persecutions, horrid wars, and the deluge of human blood, which originated from the endeavours of each party to obtrude their opinions upon others, have done more injury to the cause of Christianity, than all the opposition of its professed adversaries: and must ever be looked upon by the friends of revelation with amazement, grief, and horror.

And all this mischief seems to have had its cause in the misapprehension of the design and end for which God vouchsafed to reveal himself to his creatures. The object which revelation had in view was evidently to warm our affections with piety towards God, and
to

to light in our breasts the generous flame of charity towards men; and to encourage and support us in the exercise of our duty by the good tidings of the merciful promises of God declared by our Lord Jesus Christ; and the glorious prospect of a blessed immortality. And it had nothing to do, as many have been so egregiously mistaken as to suppose it had, with teaching us the sciences of geography, history, astronomy, philosophy, or the abstruser science of metaphysics. In all these respects the minds of those, who were sent to convert the world to our holy religion, were left liable to the opinions and — (d) prejudices of the times and countries

countries in which they lived. And a difference of sentiment is easily perceived by a careful observer to have possessed the minds of those who recorded the divine communications, according to the different periods in which they wrote, and according to the different educations they had received. Difference of opinion, then, may innocently exist among us, and ought not to be the cause of a disunion in Christian charity; much less, if we dare to make the distinction, in Christian communion.

Were no more required by establishments as terms of communion, than Christ and his Apostles required in order to admit mankind

to

to be partakers of the gospel dispensation, the violent disputes of Christians would soon sink into harmless discussions, the objections of unbelievers would be more satisfactorily answered, and the ardency of enthusiasm would be cooled and assuaged by reason and argument.

Christ (*e*) crucified would thus be more clearly manifested to be the wisdom and power of God in reforming the world, by recalling mankind to the knowledge of himself, and by turning them from their iniquities. And this solid and only true foundation being laid, every man might be safely intrusted with his own system of opinions :

opinions : and whether it was built with gold, or silver, or wood, or hay, or stubble, as the Apostle expresses it, the day of judgment would determine; and the man himself would be saved.— Had the Apostle known of any power to discriminate these materials from each other, would he not have told us? He assumed no dominion over our faith, professing himself to be only the helper of our joy : leaving us to the freedom of judging for ourselves.

And to prove it to be the will of God that mankind should be left to the full enjoyment of this liberty, and to the free exercise of their intellectual faculties in all human

human sciences, and that revelation was not intended to interfere with the human mind, in these respects, a strong presumptive argument may be deduced from this circumstance; that God permitted the promulgation of the gospel to be antecedent to the (f) discovery of the art of printing. From whence it has happened—whether through the ignorance and carelessness, or through any sinister design of the transcribers, may be hard to determine—that we have a great variety of readings in the abundance of copies which were evidently written by persons of several interests and persuasions, of different understandings, tempers, and abilities.

abilities. Now it is much to be observed that these various readings do not affect any one point respecting our piety towards God, or our moral obligations, or our dependance upon the promises of God declared by our Lord Jesus Christ. But with respect to those disputes, which have for ages agitated the Christian world, each party by retaining those readings which make for their own opinions, and rejecting those which are against them, may go a great way towards making their own cause good.

God, in whose works we observe nothing to be done in vain, in whose sight a thousand years are but as yesterday, having formed

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creatures

creatures capable of improvement, from age to age, through the successive periods of the world, by experience and by the expansion of their faculties which he has given them, has done no more by revelation than what was necessary to excite those faculties, and to enable them to produce their full effect.

These things seem to be of such high importance to the Christian world, and indeed to all mankind, who are ultimately to be blessed with the light of the gospel, as to deserve a more minute, dispassionate, and free enquiry than has ever yet been bestowed upon them; that we may the more accurately distinguish the immediate communication

nication of God from what may be most probably derived from the opinions and imagination of man.

Is there not, then, a manifest inconsistency in the conduct of this nation, which has long stood foremost in the glorious sentiments of civil and religious liberty, that while she generously bestows a liberal education upon the clergy of her establishment, she chooses that their minds should be fettered and restrained in the exercise of those very faculties which she has permitted and encouraged to be expanded?

Revelation has, by an elegant writer, been styled "the salubrious stream of divine communications"

“cations which was opened in
 “the East.” Now this stream must
 of course partake of the soils over
 which it flowed, and become tinc-
 tured with such particles as were
 capable of being united with it.
 And can they, to whom a sufficient
 education and leisure is given to
 undertake the task, better bestow
 their labours, than by endeavour-
 ing to filter it from every hetero-
 geneous particle, that they may
 refresh their Christian brethren
 with its pure and unadulterated
 waters?

Notwithstanding (g) the variety
 of opinions which now exist, and
 probably ever will exist, concord,
 harmony, and complacency would
 soon

soon be restored among Christians, could we be content to deem those things only as essential, which we find invariably express and clear in the sacred records.

We have only to bring matters back to the state they were in before councils presumed to do, what they ought never to have done. They ought never to have obscured the simplicity of faith by their arbitrary and heterogeneous determinations : much less should they have attempted to obtrude their determinations upon mankind ; or have refused to hold communion with those who were of a contrary opinion. For however agreeable to our ideas their deter-

minations might be, history compels us to acknowledge, that instead of their producing the harmony of opinion that was expected and intended, such animosities were thereby kindled, as not only checked the progress of the gospel, but deprived a great part of the Christian world of the light of it, by subjecting them to the tyranny of an insolent impostor—Mahomet (*b*). And the cities and countries in which this intolerant anti-christian spirit first displayed itself, continue to the present day to groan under the oppression of that heavy calamity, of which it was in a great measure the cause and the occasion. And when, by the overbearing

bearing weight of authority, the rest of the Christian world were forced to declare themselves to be all of one opinion, an Egyptian darkness, in respect to science and literature, overwhelmed mankind : superstitions and buthenfome ceremonies were multiplied amongst them without end ; and they were constrained to hide, as it were in a napkin, those intellectual faculties with which God had intrusted them ; and their whole time was employed at home in persecuting for opinion's sake, and in waging war abroad to convert infidels to the Christian faith.

Alas ! how contrary to the spirit of Christianity ! Oh ye mistaken

servitors of the cause ye meant to serve !

Let us not then be afraid to use those reasoning powers with which God has blessed us. Let us forbear to lay the smallest restraint upon them. It is our duty thankfully to draw from them all the good they were intended to produce.

When the Almighty condescended to commune with Abraham, we do not find that God passed any censure upon him for presuming to appeal to the immutable law of reason and equity. On the contrary, when Abraham said, " That be far from thee to do after
" this manner, to slay the righteous
" with

“ with the wicked : and that the
 “ righteous should be as the wick-
 “ ed that be far from thee : shall
 “ not the Judge of all the earth
 “ do right ? ” God acknowledged
 the justice of the plea, and was
 pleased to expostulate the case upon
 the issue which Abraham had sug-
 gested. And (*i*) it seems safer to
 draw an argument from a matter
 of *fact* recorded in holy writ, than
 from any *metaphysical notions* or *opi-*
nions whatever, even of the sacred
 writers themselves.

As then it appears to be the will
 of God that reason should have its
 full scope, and as the experience
 of past ages shews us that the en-
 deavour to lay a restraint upon it,
 though

though done with a well-meant intention (as upon the whole we ought to allow that it was), produced evil instead of good; let us try the *opposite* experiment of giving every encouragement to the free use of it. For surely it may be fairly inferred that this conduct, so contrary to that which depressed the Christian cause, would be the most likely to elevate it; and to extend the light of the Gospel to all the ends of the world, that they may remember and turn unto the Lord: and that all the kindreds of the nations may worship before him.

These sentiments I have ventured to express from a firm persuasion

suasion of their tendency to promote the public good; and having upon a late similar occasion endeavoured to shew the necessity of civil government, and the authority of the laws, together with the happy excellency of those of our own country, and also their consistency and agreement with the spirit of Christianity; I judged it not foreign to the present purpose to suggest to your meditations some of those means by which I conceive religion might be rendered more efficaciously operative upon the lives and conversations of mankind: since whatever tends to enforce the precepts of religion, and to increase their practical influence

fluence upon us, co-operates also in attaining those ends of civilization which good government has in view ; the peace, security, well-being, and good order of society.

In the completest height of civilization to which Christianity can raise us, the authority of laws and government will be found necessary, as well to point out the social duties in various respects, as to ascertain the numerous claims to which the several individuals are entitled from entering into society : since these things are not explicitly set forth in holy writ, we being only exhorted by it in general terms to pursue and practise whatsoever things we find to be honest, just, pure,

pure, lovely, and of good report. And they will of course be more accurately pointed out by men of intelligent minds, who, under the influence of the enlightening and benign spirit of Christianity, have made the study of law and government their professional employment. And here I cannot pass by the opportunity of intimating to your observation the important benefits we of this nation enjoy from the arduous labours of such eminent and upright sages.

But if by placing religion in the least disputable, and most reasonable light, we can call the minds of men to attend with more harmony and concord to its divine light,

so that the love of God and the love of our neighbour may have a more forcible influence upon them; we may reasonably expect that the number of profligate and atrocious offenders may be reduced, till we may, be seldom, if ever, under the painful necessity of cutting off injurious members of society to secure the peace and well-being of the whole. And we may farther expect that all *necessary* appeals to the laws of our country, which may arise in difficult cases, from the misapprehension of the respective parties, will be carried on with a temper of mind, and in a manner consistent with the meek, benevolent,

benevolent, amiable, and excellent spirit of the gospel.

And may God dispose our minds to pursue, in this our day, the things which belong to our peace; that we may so pass through things temporal, that we fail not finally to obtain the things which are eternal.

benevolent, amiable, and excellent
spirit of the gospel.
~~And may God direct our minds~~
to pursue, in this our day, the things
which belong to our peace; that
we may be enabled through the
power, that we feel necessarily to
obtain the things which are eternal.

S E R M O N I I I .

Preached at the Affizes at Thetford,
March 20, 1789.

St. JOHN VIII. 32.

The truth shall make you free.

IT appeared to me when engaged
in this office the last year, that
it could not be more properly dis-
charged, than by laying before my
respectable audience a vindication of
the authority of government; and

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incul

inculcating sentiments which, as Englishmen, are natural to us, and for the discussion and comprehension of which we are so eminently qualified and prepared.

It was accordingly my endeavour to shew, from the history of the divine dispensations to man recorded in holy writ, that it is the will of God that the authority of the magistrate to execute wrath upon the profane contemners of moral rectitude should be supported as well under the gospel, as under any former dispensation. And indeed what can be more conducive to the glory of Him—who is the God, not of confusion, but of order and of peace, than that the manifestation

tion of his will should tend to uphold good government in the execution of salutary laws ? From hence the human race may enjoy that happiness and tranquillity in society, which must call from every grateful heart the acknowledgments of praise and thanksgiving to their wise and benign Creator.

And after securing this essential point—this pillar, or rather this foundation of the well-being of society—the authority of government, by shewing that the right of the magistrate to bear the sword for the punishment of evil doers is congenial with the spirit of Christianity—it seemed not inapplicable to the occasion to expatiate upon

those sentiments of civil and religious liberty which have made a more rapid and extensive progress in our own age and country, than in any former period of time, or any other nation upon earth.

The prevalence of a liberal way of thinking, and the possession which the love of free enquiry has taken of the hearts of mankind in general, are well known; and were most pleasingly and satisfactorily ascertained to me by the favourable reception, and indeed approbation, which the sentiments I then delivered met with from several respectable persons. Which circumstance is both an encouragement and an apology for the continuance

nuance and still further discussion of the interesting subject, upon the present unexpected occasion; when I find myself again placed in the same situation, in consequence of the uncommon and important events that have lately taken place.

But before I proceed, let us congratulate ourselves upon the recovery of our beloved and virtuous Sovereign, and unite in lifting up our hearts in the fervency of the most ardent devotion—praising and adoring Divine Providence who has turned our grief and sorrow into joy and gladness. We may also congratulate ourselves, that in the midst of our distress, the principles

of political liberty were more clearly discerned, and more accurately defined, than they had ever been before the late critical and unparalleled emergency. It is a happiness and an honour to live in times when such an interesting transaction as the supplying the deficiency in that branch of our constitution, which may be considered to be the soul, in giving life and vigour to the rest, could be carried on without confusion, without tumult, by the most regular proceedings, and adjusted upon the firm basis of sound reason and just principles. We are indebted for this happiness to the benign and civilizing genius of the gospel : the spirit of which,
(however

(however men's speculative opinions may vary) is better understood than it ever was in former times; and will be still more and more clearly developed, the more free enquiry is permitted and encouraged.—Truth requires nothing but a candid and impartial examination to unfold itself. And truth when discovered is the securest barrier of the political rights and liberties of society.

The truth, says my text, shall make you free.

There is a natural connexion between religious truth and civil liberty. And to exemplify and explain this by considering and pointing out this mutual influence upon

each other, shall, if you please, be the subject of our present enquiries.

And, first, by truth our Saviour probably meant a knowledge of God's dispensations towards the human race.

Our Lord was speaking to a people who were under that school-master, as St. Paul styles it, the Mosaic institution.

But they did not well weigh and comprehend the instruction that was intended by it. Inflated with that universal passion, the pride of self-consequence, they made it their great delight to consider themselves as the favourite people of God; not remembering that the blessing
promised

promised in the seed of Abraham was to be extended to the whole world ; and that the Messiah, when he should come, would not only be the glory of the people Israel (if they received him), but would extend his enlightening influence to all the nations of the earth—the Gentiles as well as Jews. But a full apprehension of the benign intention of the Almighty Father of the universe would have convinced them, that the plan of their education in religious knowledge, which then lay disguised under the form of a blessing peculiar to themselves, was intended to communicate, in the fulness of time, at the due season, to the human race in general,

a con-

a conviction of his superintending providence, manifested by his gracious dispensations. Which, however partial they might appear at first, would be ultimately found to have the tenderest regard and respect to the well-being of all his intellectual creatures upon earth.

It is by the knowledge of this *history* of the divine dispensations that we are confirmed in the belief of the being of God; and assured that his providential care is extended over all his works, and that by his over-ruling power all things are made to work together for good to them that love God, even in this life in a great measure—and altogether most assuredly in the life
to

to come. This may be called the key of knowledge, as it opens the mind for the reception of just and worthy notions of God—his attributes—his government, and prudential administration of that government. Though a knowledge of the nature and essence of God is too high for us, and cannot be attained to by the most enlarged and comprehensive human faculties; yet from this history we can form suitable conceptions of his almighty power, infinite knowledge, justice, mercy, and immutable truth. As by contemplating the effects of his wisdom and omnipotence, in what we call the works of nature, we discover the wise laws he has
 given

given to the material, inanimate world; so by studying this sacred volume we comprehend his all-gracious government of his intellectual creatures. We see the end and design of the laws and directions he has given us—perceive how they tend as much to our attainment of the greatest possible happiness in this present state of things, as they fit and prepare us for the enjoyment of future endless felicity. The same wise and frugal œconomy, which is so conspicuous in the regulation of the natural world, appears likewise to take place in the administration of his moral government. For as in the works of nature we discern the operations

rations of the Supreme Being to be carried on by the fewest causes that can attain the ends to be effected; so in the manifestation of himself in his dispensations, which may be called his works of grace, we recognize the same mode of conduct. The application of means that are not absolutely necessary to the ends proposed, seems to be studiously avoided. In all his communications with mankind, and in all the effects produced by these communications, the Deity appears to have availed himself of human agency as far as it could possibly go: nor does his providential interposition in human affairs counteract or supersede our exertion of those

those faculties and capacities with which he has enriched our minds.

From this knowledge of God the same history leads us on to true ideas of human nature; and teaches us to estimate the rank and condition in which we are placed;—from whence we perceive that we are the head of the animal creation on this globe which we inhabit, and the lowest of all intelligent creatures of which we have any intimation:—that we are indebted to our Almighty Creator for our existence;—and that our reliance is upon his providence and care over us for our preservation;—and that we depend much, if not entirely, for our happiness in society,

ciety, upon our good offices one towards another. It is therefore incumbent upon us to weigh well and ascertain the rights and obligations which in every situation of life we ought to assert and are bound to discharge; that while we are reconciling ourselves to God by obedience to his will, we may effectually promote our own mutual and social prosperity. This will lead us to divest ourselves, as far as in us lies, of all inordinate self-love. They who are in inferior situations, will look up without envy to those who are placed in superior stations, perceiving their appointments necessary for the common good. And while those of

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dignity

dignity in rank, or in eminent employments, recollect the necessity of directing all their actions to the same useful end, the result must be—the strictest attention to the rights and obligations of each individual, and the enjoyment of the most perfect civil liberty which the bond and security of a well ordered society can admit.

And as religious truth thus appears to be the grand efficient cause in producing civil liberty; so, secondly, on the other hand, civil liberty will be found no less favourable in aiding and supporting us in investigating religious truth.

Civil liberty cherishes industry and application in all laudable pursuits.

suits. It invigorates and expands the powers and capacities of the intellect ; delivers us from the imposition, tyranny, and the dark errors of superstition ; and enables us, without restraint or fear, to pursue truth to whatever point she may ultimately conduct us. Arbitrary power and superstition are a mutual support to each other. They each require the depression of the intellectual faculties to secure their existence ; and are found to strike the deepest root, and to flourish in the greatest vigour, where arts and sciences are least cultivated : the progress of which dispels those horrid phantoms. A government founded upon the generous princi-

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ples of diffusing all possible happiness amongst the individuals of society, wishes indeed to restrain profaneness, licentiousness and immorality—those disturbers of its peace; but looks with a favourable eye upon the deepest research and freest enquiry after truth, when ingenuously conducted;—clearly perceiving that such investigation must, in the result of it, produce that light which may prove beneficial in advancing and promoting the great and noble design in which it is engaged.

Since religion is evidently of the last importance to us, not only in securing to each individual the bliss and glory of the life to come, but
also

also for promoting, in general, our comfort and happiness as social beings in this present state of existence; it is no wonder that the search after religious truth should claim the attention of every free government,—and that, whenever Christianity has been allowed a fair and impartial examination, its divine original, and beneficial tendency should be so conspicuous as to demand assent to the superiority and pre-eminence of it over all other religions. But this laudable zeal for truth misapplied or misunderstood has produced the most opposite and the most deplorable effects. For through the furious zeal of contending parties, which had unhappily an early rise among

Christians, it has happened, that the ruling powers, in most ages, and most nations, have been led to adopt and support one or other of the various systems of opinions in preference to the rest, instead of being content with the simplicity of the Christian religion. Which circumstance has too often increased and inflamed the divisions, and always, more or less, darkened and obscured religious truth.

But where religious truth has introduced civil liberty; civil liberty will of course aid and support free enquiry.

The Supreme Being, knowing the intended important influence of the divine communications he has vouchsafed to us, has wisely ordered,

dered, that the religious truth, conveyed by them, should lie in a small compass; and that the communications of himself and of his will should not impede or controul, but leave free the operations of the mind of man. For he well knew the effects which the powers he has bestowed upon it are capable of producing.

The history of God's dispensations were written by human agents, and in human language: and the writers were in many respects left to the ideas which were suggested by the general state of science and philosophy, rude and imperfect as it might be, in the respective ages in which they lived. And their writings

ings are imparted to beings of the same species with themselves, who vary also from each other in their modes, habits, and powers of thinking and of expressing themselves.

From hence must arise ample matter of discordance in opinions upon subjects, which will be found upon examination to be more analogous to science, than to religious truth; and were left by the Supreme Being undetermined, and to be discussed and examined by us, as science should unfold and ripen in our minds, through the successive periods of revolving ages. These also should be left free from the controul of all human authority.

The genuineness of the well attested

rested facts recorded in holy writ,
stands upon ground not to be
shaken.

From them we assuredly gather
that God communicated a know-
ledge of himself at the creation,
and afterwards by successive mani-
festations, and finally by the full and
complete discovery of life and im-
mortality by Jesus Christ.—Of the
truth of this no professor of Chris-
tianity pretends to doubt. From
hence we derive such forcible ob-
ligations to the practice of piety
towards God and of morality, both
in our intercourse with one another,
and in the due government of our-
selves; arising from a conviction of
God's approbation of virtue and

abhorrence of vice ; and of his declared mercy to all who will repent and reform their lives ; as will be sufficient to excite us to a conduct that will secure our own eternal happiness ; and will give the amplest security of our faithful discharge of the relative duties. Nor can the freest enquiry into those disputed points, which have been so long agitated in the Christian world, have any injurious effect upon the civil and religious rights of mankind ; but on the contrary be beneficial to both, by throwing light upon religious truth : which, as we have observed, has been the source of civil liberty.

Christianity, in its original simplicity,

plicity, clothed in the robes of purest truth, is the generous friend of human nature—teaching us the mutual obligations we owe each other.

It is a remark of the learned Hoadly—that “ it would sound
“ something strange to say that the
“ chief design of Christianity is too
“ plain to be understood, and too
“ evident to be seen: and yet it is
“ true that the very plainness of
“ this makes it the less attended
“ to, such a love there is in men to
“ something not so easy to be un-
“ derstood; nor of such import-
“ ance: and such a readiness to
“ find out other designs of Christi-
“ anity

“ anity more agreeable to their own
“ worldly projects !”

And who does not see the just-
ness of his observation ? Christianity,
knowing the sure founda-
tion upon which it rests, prefers
light to darkness, and invites en-
quiry.

And let not the ill-founded fears
of its friends wish to put the small-
est restraint upon the fullest and
freest examination of it.

We may defy the ablest philoso-
pher—the most subtle and the
shrewdest reasoner, to adduce an
argument to prove that it was un-
becoming the Almighty to com-
municate a knowledge of himself—

He may assign—justly ar-
and
signs

and of what he expects from us—
 and for what we may depend upon
 him. Nor can he give any plau-
 sible account of the existence of the
 Jewish and Christian claim to re-
 velation ;—and of the progress the
 religion of the latter has made, and
 of the ascendancy it has obtained
 over the minds of so large a part
 of mankind,—without acknowledg-
 ing a divine interposition.

Let the laborious and learned
 historian be at liberty, then, to
 make what search he please into
 the records of antiquity : how-
 ever inimical his designs may be,
 he can produce from them nothing
 that can invalidate the sacred his-
 tory. He may arraign—justly ar-
 raign,

raign, censure, and ridicule the folly—the more than folly—the oppressive conduct of opiniative, and not unfrequently hypocritical zealots, in raising feuds and animosities, and obscuring the simplicity of Christianity, by quarrels foreign to it, and by their presumptuous determinations. But their palpable ignorance and supercilious arrogance are clearly seen through in these more enlightened times. The sarcastic unravelling and bringing to light such absurd, such disgraceful, and pernicious transactions may, in the end, disburden Christianity of all heterogeneous impositions, and, so far from injuring—serve the Christian cause.

It

It would lay the foundation of giving the most cogent and efficacious answers to the objections of infidelity, if the professors of Christianity could be placed upon that only firm and sure ground—the defence of their religion in its original simplicity.

Were all restraints and impositions removed from them, they would find themselves supported and encouraged in studying the history of God's dispensations without any bias or prepossession arising from too high a regard to preconceived opinions, systems, and speculative notions, and to the authority of great names : this would lead them to a just distinction between

tween *religious* and *scientific* opinions, however or wherever they may appear to have been incorporated. It would open their minds to see the conciseness of religious truth; and enable them to set it forth in so conspicuous a light, as would render it more operative upon mankind: and it would qualify them also to heal those divisions, by which Christians are so miserably rent asunder—not by an undue influence or exertion of power over them—which only tend to inflame—but by a rational conviction, and by conciliating their affections in the spirit of Christian benevolence one towards another.

Something of this kind seems
requisite

requisite to be attempted in this inquisitive age, in which free enquiry has made so great a progress. Nor (k) can it more properly originate in any country than our own, in which knowledge is so generally diffused among the people; who, through every rank, from the highest to the lowest, receive an education superior to what they enjoyed in former times.

An intimation * it is said has

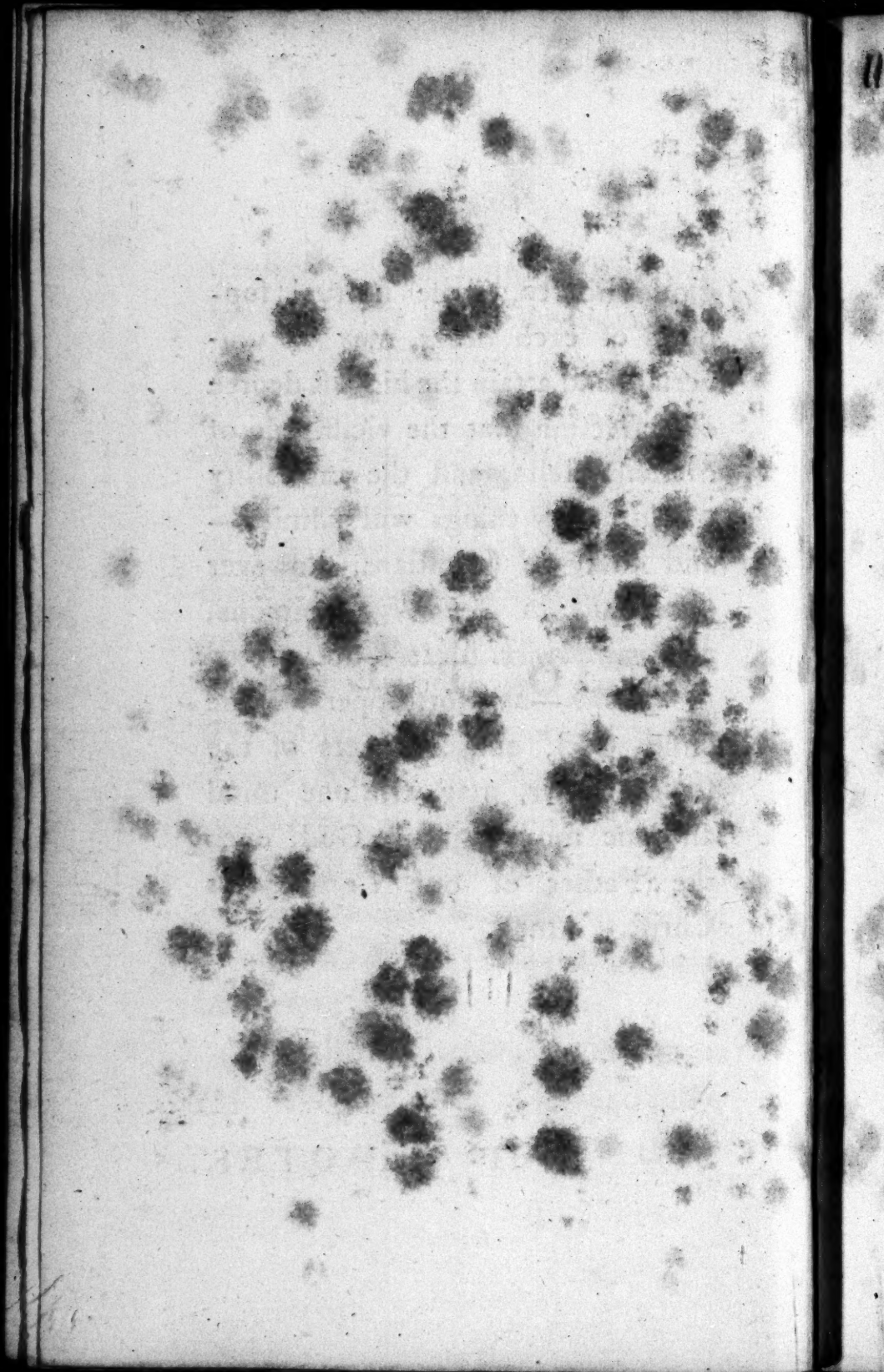
* The motion was afterwards made in the House of Lords. But the plan of it did not appear to be concerted with that well-weighted judgment which the importance of it required; and which might have been hoped from the accounts given of it in the papers, when such an intimation was announced to the public.

been

been given in an august assembly, that a proper opportunity will be taken of calling their attention to some remarks on the act of uniformity. May it not be hoped that if the subject should come under the consideration of that noble and highly respectable body—the reputation of their own clergy may claim their regard; and that these may be placed in a situation equally unfettered; and enjoy as uncircumscribed a liberty in their enquiries after religious truth, and be equally entitled to communicate it to the world, as the rest of their brethren?

I shall conclude with my earnest wish that both civil and religious

gious liberty, those mutual supports of each other, may be universal; and attain the highest degree of perfection that the vicissitude of human affairs, and the instability of sublunary things will admit:—and that we Christians, however discordant in *speculative* opinions, and *metaphysical* ideas,—yet united in *affection*—as worshippers of the same God, and followers of the same Master, may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.



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N O T E S.

W. H. C. H. and his associates
The evidence
is alluded to as the result of a jury
opinion in a case, who was
subjected to the trial of a job
list, who was by him an attempt
to execute his duty in the future of
some contraband goods. The evidence
against him was spoken and unequivocal
that it produced in the minds of every
unprejudiced person in the court the
full conviction of his guilt - and yet
H. 3

N O T E S.

page 31. (a) *WHICH had not a recent instance, &c.]* The instance here alluded to is the verdict of a jury upon the trial of a smuggler, who was indicted for the wilful murder of a soldier, who was killed by him in an attempt to execute his duty by the seizure of some contraband goods. The evidence against him was so clear and unequivocal, that it produced in the minds of every unprejudiced person in the court, the fullest conviction of his guilt:—and yet,

to the astonishment and indignation of every friend to justice and equity, and the laws of their country—he was acquitted.

p. 48 (b) *By the full expansion, &c.*] If arts and sciences could have risen to their present improved state before the diffusion of the revelation of a God and a Providence by the humanizing spirit of the gospel, they would only have supplied mankind with more powerful means, and more extensive opportunities, to distress and destroy each other. And alas! this has been too much the use made of the noble art of navigation. This Horace perceived of it in its rude and imperfect state, as appears from what he says, Lib. I. Ode 3.

Nequicquam Deus abscidit
Prudens oceano dissociabili
Terras, si tamen impie
Non tangenda rates transiliunt vada.

God

God has the realms of earth in vain
 Divided by th' inhabitable main,
 If ships profane, with fearless pride,
 Bound o'er th' inviolable tide.

FRANCIS.

But in proportion as the spirit of the gospel is better understood, this art will obtain the end for which it was originally intended. It will produce a friendly intercourse of commerce among the nations. For it seems to have been the plan of Divine Wisdom that every country should stand in need of many things, which are the natural growth or the manufacture of another, for the convenience and well being of its inhabitants. How wise, gracious, and beneficent are the works of God!

ps. 58 (c) He chose to himself a peculiar people, &c.] Nothing can give us a more clear and manifest evidence of the

superintending providence of God, his strict impartiality, and his immutable approbation of virtue, and abhorrence of vice, than the history of this people; who were dignified with the honourable appellation of the people of God: but of this history we should have remained ignorant, had we not enjoyed the light of the glorious-gospel of Christ.

p. 60. (d) *Prejudices of the times and countries in which they lived, &c.*] See the View of the Internal Evidence of the Truth of Christianity, by Mr. Soame Jenyns: who has made the judicious distinction of calling the Scriptures, not the revelation itself, but the *history* of the revelation which God has vouchsafed to the human race. This he probably did to get rid of demoniac agency, and some errors in natural philosophy, which he seems willing to attribute to
 “ the

“ the ignorance and superstition of vulgar minds.” Had he considered that the world has abounded with as much *literary* as vulgar ignorance and superstition, he would have perceived that the one might have a place in the sacred records as well as the other; and he would not so positively have asserted that the doctrine of the Trinity was so peculiar to the Christian revelation, as to be incapable of having been derived from that fertile source, the invention and imagination of man: but he would have perceived that there is room to conjecture that Plato and his predecessors may have been the authors of it. This supposition has nothing of novelty in it; but has been often urged against this doctrine; and so forcibly too, that the learned Dr. Hickman, bishop of Londonderry, who thought proper to
take

take notice of it in his sermons published 1713, had no other way of evading the charge, than by boldly declaring, "We may venture to say that this evangelical philosopher was sent by God for a forerunner of our Saviour, to prepare the way of the Lord to the heathen world."

But the matter seems capable of a solution much more natural. Plato's ideas of divine subjects were "probably acquired from the books of Moses, or the conversation of some Jewish rabbies." If we suppose them derived from the first, we may argue thus: When Plato read that God said "Let there be light," &c. instead of the judicious criticism which Longinus afterwards made, of styling it "the true sublime," he might think it would add beauty and probability to personify the word of God.

When

When he read that "the spirit of God" "moved upon the face of the waters," instead of conceiving these words, according to their most obvious meaning, to be only expressive of the energy of the Deity; his warm imagination caught at the idea of a *person*, and hence he formed his imperfect sketch of a Trinity.

If it be alleged that he probably never read those books, because he did not understand the Hebrew language, and they were not then translated into any other, still he might obtain similar ideas from conversation with some Jewish rabbi: who, without being in the least apprehensive of conveying the notion of a plurality of persons in the Deity (and the less so from the fixt opinion in his own mind of the unity of the *person*, as well as of the essence of God), might inform him, that the Almighty made the world

world by his pervading spirit, and omnipotent word. A sufficient groundwork for the genius of Plato, which delighted in fancied improvements, and was more of the embellishing than creative kind, to build up his trinitarian philosophy. From whichever of these two sources Plato acquired his ideas, it may be allowed that the seeds of the doctrine of the Trinity, that is, hints which would serve for a foundation whereon that doctrine might be built, were sown by Plato among his followers. During the time of Pagan darkness these seeds lay in a great measure dormant. But when the leaven of the gospel caused a fermentation among religious opinions, every one of an assimilating nature endeavoured, as it were, to incorporate with it. At that period arose Philo the Jew, of a soul so congenial with Plato, that

that it was said of him, " Either Philo
 " platonizes, or Plato philonizes." This
 man being contemporary with our Sa-
 viour, while the Apostles were preaching
 the gospel, he propagated Platonic Ju-
 daism throughout Asia. Let it be ob-
 served also that the most learned among
 the early converts were educated in the
 schools of the Platonists.

We may thus account for some pas-
 sages being inserted in the history of re-
 velation in conformity with Platonic no-
 tions. And no one passage of that history
 appears more obviously to have origi-
 nated from hence than the beginning of
 St. John's gospel. Let any man open
 the Greek Testament and the Septuagint
 version together, and compare the be-
 ginning of St. John's gospel with the
 beginning of Genesis; and a very little
 skill in the Greek language will enable
 him

him to see that the one is a Platonic paraphrase of the other. Great have been the altercations concerning St. John's gospel from very early ages of Christianity. One account tells us that it was written in the 97th year of Christ at the desire of the Asiatic bishops. It seems not improbable that they were the *editors* of it. Archbishop Tillotson confesses he does not think the last chapter was written by St. John, but by others. Fol. ed. vol. iii. p. 467.

Now they who added a conclusion, might also bestow a preface. And who can tell that any part of the gospel was written by St. John at his advanced age? It is not, indeed, at any rate, to be doubted but that the principal facts and anecdotes, which are preserved in this narrative, were received by the writer of it from St. John himself: but he may have told them in his own language and according

according to his own pre-conceived opinions.

It is worth observing that there is in that gospel a peculiarity which gives a suspicion that it was not written by one who had been a Jew. The writer speaks of the Jews, as he naturally would do if they were foreigners to him, but by no means as one might have expected had he looked upon them as his own countrymen. The *Jews*, he tells us, spake so and so to Jesus and to the disciples, and thus and thus spake Jesus or the disciples to the *Jews*: a mode of expression which is not adopted by any of the other evangelists; whom no one doubts to have been of that nation. Nor is it ever used by any historian in relating a transaction which happened in his own country; and in which his own countrymen only were parties. But whatever mistake there may be in these surmises with

with regard to the writer of this gospel, and supposing it granted that it was written by St. John, yet there are strong marks to support the opinion that the gospel was written very late in the first century; when the philosophy of Plato was, by means of Philo, favourably received in Asia: which may lead us to conceive that his mind was biased by it. It is the only gospel in which the terms *Zen*, *Amos*, *Moseyams*, which, it is well known, were much in vogue amongst the Platonists, are applied as they are there applied.

It is undoubtedly highly reasonable that we pay great deference to a sacred historian; but how can we help surmising that he has christianized the Philonic Platonism which then prevailed? And under the persuasion that this is possible, ought we not to be exceedingly cautious

cautious how we perplex the Christian world with a doctrine deduced from it, as an article of faith? What the writer's ideas were, when he used these terms, will be difficult for us to ascertain at this distant period. If we conceive that he meant to convey the notion of different modes of existence (which have been since called persons) in the incomprehensible Creator of all things; yet since he is singular in using these expressions, since they are of so vague a nature, and since we have no proof that this writer had a particular revelation in this matter, or that he was more fully instructed in his office than the other evangelists; it seems to be a faith of that nature which a man ought to have to himself. And then surely he ought not dogmatically to obtrude it upon others; or refuse them the right hand of fellowship for not holding it: nor ought he to be solicitous that the ex-

preffions of it, or indeed any allusions to
 it, should continue to be inserted in the
 public forms of devotion, to the great
 embarrassment of many faithful and
 thinking Christians. On the other hand,
 many wise and good men, with whose
 religious opinions these doctrines are ir-
 reconcilable; but who are equally sin-
 cere in the profession of Christianity,
 and equally punctual in the discharge of
 the duties of it, with those to whose
 theological principles these mysterious
 tenets are perfectly agreeable; have
 conceived that the evangelist adopted
 these *Platonic* terms only by way of ac-
 commodation; without any idea of violat-
 ing the Divine Unity; and it may be
 urged in their favour that the idea of a
 Trinity was not then matured. But be
 this as it may; it is much to be wished
 that all parties were allowed to enjoy
 their respective opinions of this matter

in

in tranquillity and with *credit*; for the utmost latitude of sentiment on this subject is perfectly compatible with the profession, the privileges, and the hopes of Christianity. The positive decision of a question so abstruse and disputable ought by no means to be assumed as the criterion of orthodoxy and made essential to salvation; but should be left open to free enquiry, and amicable discussion. And this end may perhaps be promoted by a few observations upon another passage of scripture. And that is the form of baptizing recorded in the 28th chapter of St. Matthew and 19th verse.

St. Matthew's gospel was written in Hebrew; and never came down to us in the original, which was soon lost; probably from this circumstance, that the Greek language was then well understood among the Jews and Jewish converts. And may we not fairly suppose

the translator to have imbibed Philonic Platonism. This will incline us to think that he might add part at least of that verse. How else can we account for its not being mentioned by any other of the New Testament writers? How else can we account for no notice being taken of that form in the several anecdotes of baptizing converts recorded in the Acts of the Apostles? It might possibly be originally a marginal note, and afterwards be inserted in the text, in all the copies which came down to us, or of which we have had any translations. The language favours of a later period than the date of St. Matthew's gospel; and betrays a mode of expression that does not appear to have been used before the second century.

If I might presume to offer a conjecture, it would be this. That I conceive it to have been inserted between the time

of

of Justin Martyr and Tertullian. For it is not quoted by the former in any of his writings: and in his circumstantial accounts of baptism, it should seem that it would have been much to his purpose: and this writer in citing quotations from the gospels (or *memoirs* as he called them), was very profuse. This also shews the possibility that the doctrine which has been thought peculiar to the Christian revelation, may have been derived from that fertile source, the imagination of man—from the imaginary improvements made by Plato upon the Jewish revelation.

We have no ground for believing that the ancient Jews had any idea of this doctrine. But the Jews about our Saviour's time were acquainted with the Greek language; hence Philo had an opportunity of acquiring the philosophy of Plato and propagating it among his countrymen.

countrymen. From whence we may easily perceive how it obtained a place in the Jewish Targums and Talmuds; of the antiquity of which we have no satisfactory account. For who can trace them higher than to the times of Philo?

But though Philo infused his notions into some of the Jews, yet there were many of them, whose minds could not be diverted from the idea of God's unity in *person* as well as *essence*. Hence probably arose the contrariety of opinion in history concerning Philo; some asserting that he was a Christian, or that he had been so in some part of his life; but that he afterwards embraced Judaism again; others that he never was a convert to the Christian faith.

However, Philo undoubtedly had his party among his countrymen; and Plato's philosophy at that period had obtained the ascendancy in the Pagan world.

world. Many therefore of the most learned, both of the Jewish and Gentile converts, came into the church with pre-conceived opinions acquired from it. And as learning gives a superiority over the bulk of mankind for the same cause that higher faculties place us above the irrational creatures, these opinions became prevalent; and notwithstanding the caution given by some of the apostles against attending to vain philosophy, and the rudiments of the world, they baffled the opposition, which history tells us was made to them in the first ages of Christianity, and caused those additions to be made to the faith, which have ever since involved the Christian world in furious contentions; and robbed us of that harmony, which ought to be the characteristic of Christians.

But the progress of this doctrine was gradual: it was not till the second cen-

. that the term *hypostasis* was invented ;
 nor does it appear that prayers were of-
 fered to Christ in the first century ; nor
 is there any command for our praying
 to him throughout the scriptures . And
 it is indisputably clear , that the Holy
 Spirit was not addressed as a distinct per-
 son in the A.D. 325 . And it begins to be a general
 opinion that the famous passage in the
 first Epistle of St. John , 5th chapter and
 7th verse , was inserted after that era :
 for it was not quoted by the Nicene Fa-
 thers in the controversy of Arius ; nor
 can it be clearly proved that it was ever
 cited by any who preceded them . Thus
 by ascribing to their proper source these
 metaphysical ideas , instead of submitting
 to them as religious truths , we may be
 enabled to avoid the awkward dilemma
 which the ingenious author of the
 symbol , called the Athanasian Creed , was
 involved ;

involved; who tells us to this purpose,
 and almost in these words, viz. "We
 are by the Christian verity compelled
 to acknowledge that, which by the
 catholic religion we are forbidden to
 say." Surely, then, these considerations
 should make us hold our opinions with
 diffidence; and be cautious how we vio-
 late the natural and inalienable rights of
 religious and intellectual liberty, which
 were given us, by our gracious Creator,
 by imposing the unnecessary, and griev-
 ous burden of obscure and systematical
 opinions: lest we excite and ferment
 pernicious divisions among our fellow
 Christians, and instead of serving the
 cause of the gospel (which it is to be
 hoped we sincerely mean to do), may
 have to answer to God for the mischief
 we occasion, and for the obloquy and the
 reproach which we bring upon our holy
 profession.

Though

Though we are greatly indebted to the writers of the New Testament, we should consider that the apostles were sent to *preach*, not to *write*. They had only to declare to the world a few plain *facts* of which they had been *witnesses*; and which were sufficient to bring mankind to a knowledge of God, and his providence; and to an assurance of a remission of their sins upon their repentance, and turning from their iniquities; and to the lively hope of the resurrection from the dead.

p. 62

(e) Christ crucified would thus be more clearly manifested to be the wisdom and power of God in reforming the world, [&c.] Whether the sacrifice of the death of Christ is, or is not, to be considered as a vicarious atonement, which he voluntarily undertook to make for the expiation of the guilt of our sins, is a question that has been much agitated, and has occasioned a great diversity of opinion.

opinion. Our Saviour speaks of himself as sent of God, and as acting under the divine commission; and when the hour of his cruel and ignominious sufferings approached, we find him in an agony of sorrow, beseeching God to avert the dreadful cup; but with a resignation and submission to the Divine will, which well became the holy suppliant.

God is every where in scripture represented as the author and bestower of the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ; and is no where said to be reconciled to us, but we are said to be reconciled to him, by the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ. And how?—Not surely in a manner analogous to that in which a charm may be supposed to operate; but by the effect and influence which a serious belief and contemplation of these events will naturally produce upon our manners and principles;—by our deliverance

liverance from darkness and superstition, and our introduction to the knowledge and worship of the only true God;—and by the motives which are proposed to us to serve and obey him, and to turn from our iniquities.

Had the Jews become proselytes to our Saviour's doctrine, we may presume to conjecture that they would have been made the happy instruments of God, under his *anointed*, for bringing the Pagan world to the knowledge of God and his righteous laws; and they would have escaped the severe punishments nationally poured upon them for rejecting him; the prospect of which our Saviour so pathetically lamented, when he perceived that by their obstinacy and unbelief they would persist in bringing down those judgments upon themselves, and the end of our Saviour's mission would probably have been answered *without* overthrow

liverance from darkness and bondage
 without his death and sufferings. And
 he seems at his transfiguration, and per-
 haps not before, to have been fully con-
 firmed in his apprehensions that he
 should be rejected by the Jews, and put
 to death; and probably the apparition of
 Moses and Elias was sent to inform him
 of the final impenitence of the Jews, and
 to exhort and advise him upon the occa-
 sion. For when he came down from the
 mount he talked to his disciples more
 pointedly than usual upon that subject:
 and he soon after, with evident marks of
 dejection, pathetically upbraided that
 faithless and perverse generation of his
 countrymen. I have always conceived
 that all prophecy of good or evil to man-
 kind, or to any particular person or peo-
 ple, was conditional. Let any one read
 the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, and
 carefully compare it with the history of
 the Jews, from that time to the final
 overthrow

overthrow of Jerusalem recorded by Josephus: and it may lead him to think that the triumphant strains of Isaiah in his 40th chapter, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," &c. and the humiliating complaint in his 53d chapter, "Who hath believed our report? &c." are two conditional prophecies; if they be allowed, as I think they must, to relate to the coming of the Messiah; which event was absolute. And therefore though the Jews rejected the Messiah, and even executed him as a malefactor; yet the benefit which God, who was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, intended to confer on mankind, could not be so defeated; but he vindicated the righteousness of his anointed by raising him from the dead; and made that same Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified, to be both Lord and Christ; who then deputeth his apostles to gather from the Jewish

Jewish nation all, who, by becoming profelytes to his doctrine, should prove themselves proper objects of divine mercy; and afterwards sent them to preach the gospel to the Pagan world. Therefore we may justly say, that we are redeemed by the death and sufferings of Christ: and that through his blood we obtain remission of our sins, if thereby repentance and the love of God be wrought in our hearts; and that we are bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Christ, which valuable price was paid, not to God to render him propitious to us, but to the malice of the Jews, who, though by this atrocious act they lost the glorious lustre which he would have shed upon the people of Israel, could not prevent his being a light to enlighten the Gentiles. God resigned up his beloved son to ignominious and painful suffering, that he might
bring

bring us to himself,—for by the resurrection of our Lord he “hath begotten us again to a lively hope.” Whoever still thinks that any expression of St. Peter, St. Paul, or any other apostle, even after all due allowance made for the eastern mode of expression, conveys to him the idea of vicarious atonement; he may consider, that as they were liable to be influenced by impressions of education, they were also liable to mistakes arising from thence. The mind of St. Peter, though honest, was so very much warped by Jewish prejudices, and rabbinical fables, that he stood in need of particular visions, and revelations, to enable him to proceed in the execution of his apostolic commission. And a rabbinical tale seems to have been uppermost in his mind, when speaking of our being redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, he says, “Who verily was fore-ordained

"before the foundation of the world;
 "but was manifested in these last times
 "for you." 1st Epistle, 1st chapter,
 20th verse. The tale is this: "When
 "God created the world he held forth
 "his hand under the throne of glory
 "and created the soul of the *Messiah*
 "and his company, and said to him,
 "Wilt thou heal and redeem my sons,
 "after six thousand years? He an-
 "swered, Yes. God said to him, If
 "so, wilt thou bear chastisements to ex-
 "piate their iniquity according to what
 "is written, *Isaiah liii. 4, Surely he*
 "*bore our griefs?* He answered, I will
 "endure them with joy." And St. Paul,
 whose predestinarian ideas are proba-
 bly derived from Jewish prejudices, the
 seeds of which were perhaps sown in the
 Chaldean captivity, is supposed to refer
 to the same in his Epistle to the Ephi-
 sians, 1st chapter, 4th verse. His in-
 formation can be known of W. attention

tion seems to have been, to compromise matters between Jewish and Gentile converts; that whereas the first boasted themselves then elected, the latter might think themselves also elected with them. See Dr. Whitby's Annotations on both places.

St. Paul seems to have been very fond of using the *argumentum ad hominem*, in addressing the Jews; who might probably object to Christianity as destitute of sacrifices and ritual observances; and it was natural for him to reply, Can you have faith in the blood of bulls and goats, that they sanctify to the purifying of the flesh? How much more shall the blood of Christ purify your consciences from dead works to serve the living God! Here we may again observe that the effect which the death and sufferings of Christ are said to work, is upon *us*, and not upon God. We have as firm a reli-

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ance under this idea upon the promises of God declared by our Lord Jesus Christ, as under the metaphysical idea that an atonement was made to the justice of God to enable his mercy to operate; and we may, upon either supposition, rest equally satisfied with the assurance, or in the implicit faith, that every thing was done in this matter which it became God to do. Each party may have their particular faith to themselves, and give the right hand of fellowship to the other. But when metaphysical disquisitions are made to pass for religious truths, unbounded is the mischief of which they are productive: and this, alas! has unhappily been the case from the first century through several ages; perhaps to the present period of the Christian era. Nor will the idea I have suggested reduce Christianity to a mere moral system; for it teaches piety as well as morality; and that the former

is the only true foundation of the latter; and that the motive to both rests on our belief of the divine mission of Jesus. Christianity, then, was intended to make us happy by the practice of virtue. But the essential distinction between philosophy and Christianity is this; that whereas philosophy endeavours to lead us to virtue, by shewing the agreeableness of it to the reasonableness and fitness of things, and its subserviency to our own happiness and improvement; Christianity lays the foundation of virtue in the love and the authority of God. We are therein taught to cherish the love of God in our hearts; and to exemplify it by our benevolence to our fellow-creatures. And we are instructed, that by communicating with the Deity in meditation and prayer, we may obtain or acquire a mind like that which was in Christ; and which will dispose our hearts to the practice of

all those duties which in philosophy are called moral virtues, but are more properly to be styled by us Christian graces. By these means revelation is capable of leading us to a virtuous life and conversation in a degree far superior to that to which we can be guided by the most complete system of morality that can be collected from the writings of the philosophers. It is undoubtedly one great end of the sacrifice of the death of Christ (and without calling the others in question a motive sufficient to engage us in our duty, and consequently enough for us to know), that as the Captain of our salvation was made perfect by sufferings, and passed through them into his joy, so it is our duty to follow his example of patience, obedience, and resignation to the will of God, and to pass through the evils that may any time befall us in this life; more especially those which are

brought upon us by the discharge of our duty with confidence or faith of obtaining the rewards of bliss and glory which God has promised in the life to come. Hence we see one great advantage arising from our complying with our Lord's institution of eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of his death.

This notion of mine of the original *contingency* of the death of Christ, I am very sensible may give offence to many whose disapprobation I shall be unwilling to incur. Nor am I so partially fond of it myself as to go great lengths in its vindication. If Christ had not fallen by the hands of the Jews, he would probably have been sacrificed to the political jealousy of the Romans; and his death might have been predetermined, whilst the desolation and destruction of the Jews remained contingent. If it were necessary that he should be destroyed,

it does not appear to have been necessary that he should have been destroyed by the Jews. And though his death and passion might have been preordained, it does not follow that he was apprised of the destiny that awaited him, till he was likewise apprised of the final impenitence of his countrymen. At what time the fore-knowledge of these events was communicated to him cannot be ascertained with any precision. It was probably communicated gradually, and might not be complete, as has been hinted, till about the time that the vision of Moses and Elias was presented to him at his transfiguration. His appointment to the office of the Messiah would not, of itself, conduct him to a foresight of his death and sufferings. For these humiliating ideas were never annexed by the Jews to the character and expectation

expectation of their Messiah. See St. John, 12th chapter, 34th verse.

p. 64. (f) *The discovery of the art of printing, &c.* The more any one studies the history of divine communications, keeping in view the progress of the arts and sciences from the creation of Adam to the present time, the more he must be convinced of the infinitely wise oeconomy of the Almighty, and of the strict analogy between what we call the works of nature and those dispensations which we call the works of grace. And the more clearly will he perceive that every divine communication was made at the proper juncture when the intellectual powers of man stood in need of just so much help as was given them: and that nothing was done thereby to supersede or embarrass the gradual improvement of them. Had the discovery of the art

of printing been previous to, or too soon after, the manifestation which God made of himself by divine communications, we cannot conceive but that one of these two things must have been the consequence; either the Almighty must have superseded the use of human reason by giving us a complete system of philosophy, metaphysics, &c. which I trust I have shewn that he evidently did not, notwithstanding many respectable characters seem to entertain that idea;—or the improvement of man's intellectual faculties must have been for ever embarrassed (an effect which the idea of plenary inspiration did for a long time actually produce), unless we had given up our greatest consolation in life, a belief in Christianity; to which fatal step many learned and ingenious men were driven. For we must have been for ever tied down to the imperfect and mistaken notions

tions and opinions in philosophy, metaphysics, &c. of those early ages of the world, in which the sacred records were written, and in which human sciences had made so small a progress; by the exact correspondence of the copies which the art of printing would have given us. We cannot but remember what a fatal effect the idea of plenary inspiration had upon the unhappy Galileo, for asserting the antipodes. And yet any man would be now laughed at for calling them in question. Metaphysical science stands upon a more uncertain ground than those sciences which are capable of experimental confirmation. And therefore it may be a longer time before we can gain our liberty in metaphysical reasoning. But if improvement in some sciences may justify our entertaining ideas contrary to those of the sacred writers, we ought not to be forbidden to try the operation

ration of the human faculties upon any other.

/s. 68 (g) *Notwithstanding the variety of opinions, &c.*] Opinions have nothing to do with religion, which is capable of affording its light to men of every philosophic sect. And Sprat, who was forced to labour in combating the bigotry of his times, justly observes, in his History of the Royal Society, that it was absurd to endeavour to restrain religion to the Peripatetic sect alone. "For," says he, "by this means the benefit of religion will become very narrow, seeing where reason takes place it will only convince them who are of the same opinions in philosophy with those that convert them." Again. "They must remember, that the chief of the apostles became all things to all men that he might gain some." But above all there must be caution given that men do not strive to make themselves

“themselves and their own opinions
 “adored while they only seem zealous
 “for the honour of God.”

All the works of God are progressive;
 and the Christian dispensation is analo-
 gous to the rest. It was at first a small
 seed sown, which soon grew up to a
 goodly tree; and is left to us to cultivate,
 not by building up metaphysical systems
 of theology, and demanding universal
 assent to them, but by displaying the
 beauty of holiness in our lives and con-
 versations, and so inviting converts to it.
 Difference of opinion is perceptible in
 the different writers of scripture. We
 therefore may differ too, and yet remain
 in Christian unity.

It is no business of ours then peremp-
 torily to determine any of those abstruse
 questions, which have been injudiciously
 connected with religion, and deemed
 essential to the influence of it; such as
 fore-

fore-knowledge and free-will, the union of immaterial with material essences, and many more of the same inexplicable kind which will readily occur. We cannot but perceive that the scripture writers conceived very differently of these subjects, and treat them differently. What business then have we to be peremptory or dogmatical? What have we to do with the incomprehensible union of material with immaterial essences? We have no means of distinguishing the substance of the one from the substance of the other. Nor is it incumbent upon the Christian to give a satisfactory or indeed any account of the origin of evil.—Sufficient it is for us to know that an over-ruling providence guides the whole: and that if we remember God in all our ways, and are careful to discharge our duty, we shall be finally happy. It is of no importance to us to know

know whether our Saviour existed previous to his birth or not. Our relation to him begins with his appearance in the flesh. And as to what may be supposed to have been the opinion of some of the apostles upon this subject, we ought to recollect that the pre-existence of souls was a favourite doctrine of the Platonists, and was undoubtedly received by our Lord's disciples. See St. John, chapter ix. ver. 1 and 2.

Let those who think themselves capable of the investigation, be at liberty to make what search they please into these abstruse points. But their determination ought by no means to be *obtruded* upon us as essentials of religion, nor should the acknowledgment of them be made necessary to our Christian profession. If we are desirous that the human mind should attain the highest degree of knowledge and perfection of which it is capable

ble, we must encourage it to think and to judge for itself: and if we wish to render our religion respectable, we must leave it open to free enquiry and candid investigation.

10. 70 (b) *Mahomet.*] The notion of a ple-
nary inspiration, as it has been called,
of the scriptures, and the consequent
opinion that all philosophical and meta-
physical ideas to be deduced from thence
were to be looked upon as religious
truths, caused the ferment which at that
period of the world, when this extraor-
dinary man appeared, rendered the se-
veral parties of Christians so inimical to
each other. And this seems to have
originated from their presuming to judge
à priori what God *ought* to do, instead
of humbly examining what God actu-
ally *had* done. They laid it down as a
maxim, that if God vouchsafed to com-
municate

communicate any knowledge of himself to his creatures, it was incumbent upon him so to superintend the writers of the records of those communications, as to over-rule their minds, even in *scientific* matters; that those writings might be a perfect rule in all respects. The sagacious Mahomet perhaps agreed with them in this idea; but their violent disputes, which had then degenerated into a savage ferocity, manifested to him that their writings could not be considered as such a rule. He therefore ventured to aim at imposing a new religion upon the world. And to obviate this difficulty, in which he saw the Christians were involved, he pretended that his Koran was perfection itself, and that it was brought to him by an angel from heaven. And craftily and subtilely drew the sword, not only to propagate his religion, but also

to

to guard his Koran from dangerous commentaries. See the mischief of man's pretending to lay down rules for the conduct of the Almighty. The nature of man and the ends of his creation are perfectly known to the great Creator; and they are without doubt the grounds and reasons of all his dispensations towards the human race. They will therefore be the most accurately understood, and the most clearly apprehended, from an attentive survey of those dispensations which are recorded for our use in the scripture history. From hence we shall be able to learn how far the Deity has been pleased to interpose by means of these divine communications; and how far he has thought proper to leave us to the use and exercise of those powers and faculties with which he has endued us. He never designed us for sloth and inactivity,

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tivity,

tivity, but gave us our powers to be used and employed. In natural philosophy, astronomy, and geography, we evidently see we cannot adopt the ideas which the scripture writers adopted. Surely then it can be no presumption, but on the contrary a very useful employment humbly to enquire whether we are under any obligation to adopt their *metaphysical* notions, or whether we ought not to judge for ourselves in *these* points, as well as in the others, which have now been mentioned. That there have been miraculous interpositions and divine communications made by visions and audible voices which are applications to the external senses cannot be doubted by any one, who believes the sacred history. But it may be doubted whether inspiration, as it is generally understood, ever existed. They to whom these communications were made,

made, might be left to those faculties, which denominate us rational creatures, in recording and reasoning upon them: **Castello** and **Le Clerc** have made some acute observations upon inspiration: and it is a subject which still requires a more accurate and free enquiry. We ought not to be afraid of a strict examination into this matter; on the contrary, we ought to encourage it, as the only means by which we can set revelation forth in its pure and genuine simplicity. And I have thrown out these hints in hopes they may induce some abler hand to discuss this point.

3 (i) *And it seems safer to draw an argument from a matter of fact, &c.* If we admit the *historical* matters of fact of the divine interpositions recorded in holy writ, without paying the least deference to the *private opinions* of the scripture

writers, but read them as we would common historians, like Livy or Polybius; we should lose very little that is worth keeping; for every essential of Christianity would be preserved; for the essentials of Christianity are not metaphysical opinions; nor to be derived from abstruse speculations; but consist in a few plain practical motives to piety and virtue of the most powerful efficacy—influencing our moral and religious conduct. If we believe that God, by the divine mission of Jesus Christ, has graciously called us out of darkness into light, from idolatry to the worship of himself, and from sin to the practice of virtue; upon the free promise of recompensing our piety and virtue with a blessed immortality, announced to us by the resurrection of our Lord, by whom he has mercifully declared he will pardon our iniquities upon

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our sincere repentance, and actual amendment, we have motives for regulating ourselves and conversations, to which no additional force can be given by any speculative opinions whatever. And these motives can *associate* themselves with any system of philosophy, or metaphysics, that has been, or may be adopted. And these motives are clearly made known to us by the *historical* facts recorded in the sacred writings; and are totally independent of the *private* opinions of the respective writers.

To prevent any false construction being put upon what I have said in this note, I beg leave to observe that *common* historians relate only the *natural* events, and *usual* transactions of mankind; whereas the *sacred* historians relate the *supernatural* events, and the *divine communications* which God has been pleased to

afford his creatures. The light thrown upon their minds by these divine communications led them to meditations upon God, and his providence, and his gracious attention to his intellectual creatures upon earth; which meditations may be said to have inspired them upon these subjects: as every one may be said to be inspired upon those matters towards which he has intensely turned his thoughts. And this seems to be the meaning of St. Paul (if we analyse his expression upon the principles of plain common sense), when he says, "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," though I will not take upon me to say what the precise ideas of the apostle were. But we have no historical matter of fact to prove that God ever conveyed any ideas to the human mind, otherwise than by visions, and audible voices, operating

rating upon the senses, which are probably the only inlets by which God has permitted the human mind to receive ideas. And of these modes of communicating divine instruction we have innumerable instances recorded in holy writ.

When God was pleased to give the express words of the ten commandments, we are not told that Moses was inspired upon the occasion; but that they were written by the finger of God.

When men of exalted genius, such as David and Isaiah, recorded in writing, and expatiated upon the divine communications they had received; they reached a sublime conception of thought, and a lofty expression of words in describing the attributes of God; which men of the most refined spirits, among the heathen writers, could not approach.

But permit me to observe, that, in the Psalms of David, we meet with such expressions of outrageous anger, and unrelenting ill will, as even to disgust many Christians when they are read in our churches; which is a strong suspicion that the scriptures, heavenly treasures, as they are, were poured out to us from earthen vessels.

p. 73
(1) *Even of the sacred writers themselves, &c.*] This assertion might have been extended to Jesus Christ himself, without giving any just offence to any of the three grand hostile sects, into which Christianity is unhappily divided. The Athanasians are often obliged to allow, that, in his ministry, he acted in a merely human capacity—The Arians assert, that the great Created Being, whom they suppose to have taken our nature upon him, emptied himself of his super-eminent

ment powers.—And the Socinians could have no cause to dispute the matter.

There is no doubt but that our Lord was furnished with all knowledge relative to the discharge of his mission from God—and communicated to his apostles all knowledge relative to the discharge of their mission from him. But it does not appear that either the one or the others had acquired a Newton's depth of investigation in natural philosophy, or a Locke's clearness of perception in metaphysical discussions. These great and respectable talents, and the objects upon which they are employed, though they are useful and ornamental in a very eminent degree, are not essentially necessary to piety and virtue, or to any of those ends and purposes which the Deity appears to have had in view in his

this various communications with man-
kind.

Philosophy and literature, arts and
sciences, therefore, constitute no part of
divine revelation, but are left to be cul-
tivated by mere human abilities, and by
the exertion of those powers which un-
fold themselves in the minds of inge-
nious men. It is true, the minds of
Locke and Newton not only shined with
these ornamental sciences; but glowed
also with those warm affections of piety
and virtue, which characterize the true
Christian. But the minds of some other
men have made a progress nearly equal
to theirs, in human knowledge, and yet
have not been susceptible of the pious
and benign influence of the glorious gos-
pel of Christ. And on the other hand
there have been men eminently conspi-
cuous

cuous in piety and virtue, whose minds in human sciences have been remarkably dark and clouded.

p. 111 (k) Nor can it more properly originate in any country than our own, &c.] As this nation has long enjoyed the benefit of free enquiry, in a degree far superior to any other, the good effects of that blessed privilege may reasonably be expected to be proportionably conspicuous. One good effect which it has evidently produced, and which is worthy of our most serious attention, is this: there are in this nation more men (perhaps ten to one) of philosophic genius and literary accomplishments, who are sincere believers in the gospel of Christ, warm friends of it, and zealous advocates for it, than in those countries where a free examination of it is rigorously prohibited. It is true these philosophic and learned believers

believers have united the essentials of
 Christianity with very different theolo-
 gical and religious opinions, correspond-
 ing, most probably, with their respective
 different systems of philosophy and me-
 taphysics. But these various and discord-
 ant opinions, though opposite to each
 other, seem to have been equally fa-
 vourable to the profession, and the vital
 influence, of Christianity. From hence,
 then, arise the most incontestable proof
 and the clearest conviction that philoso-
 phy and metaphysics are heterogeneous
 to pure and simple Christianity, though
 capable, under any form, of uniting with
 it. What a great pity it is then, that,
 notwithstanding the variety of opinions,
 we cannot be firmly united in Christian
 communion! Few, I presume, will be so
 hardy as to assert that our salvation de-
 pends upon our *opinions*.—God forbid that
 it

it should—for neither the depth of learning, nor strength of abilities, nor (what is still more to the purpose in the present case) the most zealous warmth of piety and love of virtue, founded upon the sincerest attachment to the gospel of Christ, can induce us to adopt the same system of opinions, and produce a uniformity of sentiment. That seems to be incompatible with the nature of man. We may here adduce on one hand the examples of Addison, Berkley, and Nelson; and on the other, those of Clarke, Locke, and Newton—men as illustrious for piety, virtue, and zeal for Christianity, as any that these latter ages have produced. They were all firm and immoveable in the faith that *Jesus is Christ*; but how widely different in their opinions upon those speculative and abstruse subjects upon which we have vainly and presumptuously disputed for ages!—

Nor is this difference in religious opinions and tenets confined to individuals: whole churches and societies of Christians differ and dissent from one another. And even those churches, which do not pretend to infallibility, are absurd and inconsistent enough to make the assent to some particular system of opinions the terms of their communion.

But it may reasonably be expected, as it is sincerely wished, that our own respectable church should set the glorious example of putting an end to these confusions, and healing these divisions, by extending her maternal arms to all the believers in the gospel of Christ; whatever opinions they may mix with that fundamental and *only* necessary faith, which was *solely* insisted upon at the first promulgation of the gospel—That *Jesus is Christ*.

For what nation is better prepared for

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so useful and so noble an attempt? No
 nation can boast of superior characters,
 or of a greater proportionate number of
 them, eminent as well for their acquired
 knowledge, as their natural endowments.
 Nor has any nation a clergy of greater
 liberality of education and sentiment,
 or more capable of guiding and preserv-
 ing the people from every approach to
 prophaneness, impiety, and a neglect of
 useful and necessary ordinances, on one
 hand; and from gloomy superstition and
 mad enthusiasm on the other. In this
 our day in which we enjoy these high
 advantages, the proper fruits of them
 may reasonably be expected. These
 means and opportunities of serving the
 cause of true religion, by which we are
 so eminently distinguished, lay us under
 the most sacred obligations diligently to
 apply them to the purpose for which they
 are

are so obviously intended by divine Providence: and if we neglect to do it, we have just grounds to be apprehensive that God may deprive us of them, and bestow them upon other nations, who may be wise enough to make a better use of them. Who does not see that civil and religious liberty is advancing by gradual indeed, but not tardy movements in most of the kingdoms of Europe? A warm and affectionate zeal for the honour and prosperity of my country, a cordial attachment to its true interest, and a sincere veneration for its respectable religious establishment, conspire to make it my hearty desire and prayer to God, that this church and nation may not neglect the blessed opportunity, which seems to be presenting itself, of being the *first* to give this illustrious example of religious moderation;

tion; so agreeable to the natural rights of mankind, and so conformable to the genius and true spirit of Christianity.

About nineteen years ago a petition was presented to the House of Commons, by some clergymen and others, requesting that the imposition of subscription to articles, and declaration of assent and consent to the doctrines contained in them, and in the liturgy, might be *abolished*. The petition happily brought on an important debate, which was very ably supported by the friends of religious liberty. At the same period another plan was also proposed by Mr. Woolaston, a gentleman of abilities, and of an amiable character, which was to resume the unfinished business of Tillotson, Patrick, Stillingfleet, &c. and to apply to the bench of bishops to *alter* the liturgy and articles; but still to require *subscription* to them. To this specious proposal a

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great number of very respectable names
 acceded: but most probably their inten-
 tions were not the same; and their views
 might be extremely various. Some might
 mean no more than to *amuse*, by a few
insignificant and merely *verbal* alterations.
 The greater part might wish to have the
 Arian, or rather, if it may so be called, the
Clarkean opinion adopted, which seems
 to have been at that time the favourite,
 or, if I may be allowed the expression,
 the *fashionable* idea. But the objections
 to this plan were strong, though at
 first sight they might not be so obvious.
 A mere critical alteration in *words* and
expressions, without giving a latitude and
 free scope to *opinions*, but, on the con-
 trary, still rigidly imposing those that
 were already established, would have
 been no more than the *pageantry* of an
 alteration, without the reality of it; and
 could have had no other effect than to
 have

Have disappointed the expectations that had been raised, and irritated those, who dissented from the established opinions, into a most unhappy ferment. And on the other side, really and substantially to have altered the liturgy and the articles in conformity to any one system of opinions, different from that which is now established, and to have demanded *subscription* to them, would not only have given just offence to all who might have differed in opinion from those, who would have been so partially and exclusively gratified; but would have been peculiarly unjust and cruel to those, who are religiously and conscientiously attached to the present established opinions. It is no wonder, then, that, opposed by these insuperable objections, this scheme of Mr. Woolaston should prove abortive. The *other* plan, of *entirely* abolishing subscription to articles, &c. in favour of

which application was made to the House
 of Commons, though it was negatived by
 that body, and perhaps wisely *then*, as a
 matter that might require more time to
 be sufficiently considered, and investi-
 gated, and approved by the nation at
 large; yet from the noble debate it pro-
 duced, and the forcible arguments urged
 in its favour; and still more from the
 light which has been since thrown upon
 the subject by many and very able wri-
 ters; is so far from being a dying cause,
 that it has continued to acquire strength,
 vigour, and popularity, from that very
 period. And such is the mild and bene-
 volent spirit of the times; such is the
 complacency and respect with which
 Christians have learnt to regard each
 other, however they may differ in their
 religious opinions; such is the mutual
 forbearance and toleration which have
 arisen from the evident necessity, per-
 ceptible

ceptible to all parties, of allowing the unalienable right of intellectual liberty and freedom of judgment; that should this important and interesting subject be again brought before that honourable assembly, it would probably meet with the success which it so highly deserves.

And this seems to be the most proper previous step to an alteration in our religious establishment (an alteration which no one must pretend to say is not wanted; since it has been so earnestly requested, and so loudly called for, by so many and such respectable characters); for this would enable the clergy ingenuously to come forward with their *real* sentiments, which they are now deterred from doing, by the obloquy and reproach they might probably have to wade through, as well as by foreseeing a total disappointment of their just and reasonable hopes of advancement in their professional line. It may

may be objected, perhaps, that men of warm tempers and weak judgments would harass and perplex the understandings of the people with their polemical discussions. To this I should answer, that no good can be obtained in this world pure and unmixed. Our best concerted schemes will ever be liable to inconvenience and imperfection. No great end or design of ours can be accomplished without some difficulty. And if the present proposal for the advancement and improvement of true religion labours under no other or greater defects than must necessarily adhere to every human institution, the objection is of no force, and will be very disingenuously urged. It may be expedient that the clergy should be restrained by moderate and judicious laws, from waging polemical war from the *pulpit*. Men of ingenious and liberal minds (and I trust they constitute

constitute so large a majority amongst the clergy as to render those of an opposite description of little account) would disdain such conduct in themselves, and discountenance it in others; and would be content with the free use of the press in diffusing and supporting their sentiments. The road towards improvement can never be pursued if we always slothfully figure to ourselves a lion in the way. We must encounter difficulties, and we ought not to be deterred by dangers, provided the end which we propose will amply justify the means that must be employed to obtain it.

By the mild and inoffensive mode of proceeding, which I have now ventured to suggest, the nation would quietly and gradually, and perhaps in a short time, be prepared for an alteration of our liturgy. Let not the friends of the church of England start at the word. It is with
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a view to beautify and adorn, not to deface and destroy, that an alteration is recommended. And since my subject so naturally leads, and even importunes me to do it, I hope my presumption will be pardoned, if I shall humbly attempt to trace the outlines of the plan upon which, as it appears to me, it might be most satisfactorily accomplished.

[3] Let all creeds be dismissed from our public form of worship, as unnecessary to those who assemble together for the purpose of divine worship, with an avowed faith in Jesus Christ: of which faith it ought to be deemed a sufficient evidence, that they join in prayers and praises which are offered up to Almighty God in his name. Let the object of worship be expressed in those terms *only* which Christ and his apostles authorized by their precepts and directions. This would bring us back to the primitive
 2 simplicity

simplicity of addressing prayers for all blessings spiritual and temporal, and ascribing all glory, adoration, and praise *solely* to the God and Father of all, through Jesus Christ our Lord: leaving those, who apprehend a distinction in the unity of the Deity, to the unrestrained operation of the pious conceptions of their minds in their devotions. And that they may not be in the least embarrassed, let no subscription be required to the form of prayer. It would be needless then to reverse the articles. Let them gently sink into oblivion; or rather, as Dr. Gregory has said they will, let them "long remain a monument of the extent and weakness of the human understanding"—we have only to forbear to require subscription to them.

E N D.

